

**Minutes of Special Meeting of the Taxicab Advisory
Group (TAG) and the Limousine Advisory Group (LAG)
March 4, 2010 - 10:30 AM, 140 W. Flagler Street, Room #908**

TAG Members Present:

Les Eisenberg
Diego Feliciano
William Samek, Ph.D.
Dawood Akhtar
Rolando Aedo
Monica Beltran
Jackie Bofill (Rep. Port of Miami)

LAG Members Present

Neil Goodman
Carla Boroday
Austin Cohen
Antonio Meilan
Mark Mitros
William D. Talbert III

Staff Present:

Cathy Peel
Joe Mora
David Iglesias
Nancy Perez
Bridgette Newsome

Director, CSD
Director, PTRD
Legal Advisor
Senior Executive Secretary, CSD
Secretary, PTRD

Mr. Neil Goodman welcomed everyone to the combined meeting of the LAG and TAG. Mr. Diego Feliciano commented on a report that was forwarded to the County Manager for the Government Operations Committee Agenda for March 9th. Ms. Peel requested that the item on the today's agenda be addressed and that she would separately communicate with Mr. Feliciano and others who wished to discuss the other issue.

Mr. Goodman stated that the issue was how to provide a welcome environment for global events such as Art Basel, PGA, Super Bowl, etc. and how courtesy vehicles affected local transportation operations during these special events. He said that the main concern was that there were no restrictions on the drivers operating these vehicles, e.g. no background checks and no motor vehicle reports. He had received reports that those drivers were soliciting jobs at hotels, etc. There was a suggestion that a cap should be placed on how many courtesy vehicles should be allowed at these special events, noting that with Art Basel, there were about 250 vehicles.

Mr. Bill Talbert said that Art Basel and other special events are crucial to tourism in Miami and he suggested a meeting with the special events management to discuss any issues in an amicable manner. He offered to help in arranging a meeting.

Mr. Cohen stated that the limousine industry is not benefiting from the big events because of the courtesy vehicles and suggested that drivers of these vehicles be licensed.

Mr. Aedo mentioned that courtesy vehicles have always been used with special events in Miami and suggested that a look into how other cities hosting special events operate with courtesy vehicles would be beneficial in any decision making.

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Ms. Boroday said that she did some research and there are certain cities, including Miami, where a courtesy vehicle is permitted if it is a van, owned by a hotel, and has the name and logo of the hotel.

Dr. Samek made a motion that a representative of the TAG/LAG meet with the special events organizer and require that they use only licensed limousine/taxi drivers to drive their courtesy vehicles. Also that the CSD lease space on the taxi/limo vehicles to the special events organizers, two weeks in advance of the event, to place magnetic signs, advertising the event to take place.

Mr. Mora explained that if the motion passed, only existing licensed drivers could drive courtesy vehicles and companies would not have sufficient drivers to perform their jobs.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Ms. Beltran stated that courtesy vehicles run by hotels pay the Airport fees; however, Art Basel and other special events operations have specific arrangements. She also said that the proposition that advertising be placed on vehicles may not be feasible since these events have sponsors who pay a lot of money, are very organized and have control of the events.

Mr. Talbert reiterated that it would be advisable to meet with the special events organizers and discuss issues affecting them. He said the Group should survey other cities to determine how they deal with courtesy vehicles. Mr. Goodman gave as an example, that he sent cars to Dallas for the All Star Game and he called ahead of time to find out the requirements. He was told that if he had private chauffeurs doing courtesy work, no permits were required.

Mr. Cohen said that he spends a lot of money on permits, etc. and he felt that staff should have some control over the number of courtesy vehicles that come here for special events. Mr. Goodman said that with a courtesy vehicle, there is no fee; however, the chauffeur receives gratuity. He asked staff if that would fit the description of a courtesy vehicle.

Mr. Mora said that a background check could be required for the drivers instead of using licensed drivers from the companies. He said that a document could be prepared relating to background checks for drivers, insurance, etc. to be presented to the organizers.

Ms. Beltran also suggested that staff design a course where courtesy vehicle drivers would be required to have a background check, learn points of interest, get an introduction to the city, and know the basic requirements of the industry. At the conclusion, they would be given temporary permits.

Mr. Castro commented that special events are important to our economy; however, some companies pay for permits, inspections, etc. while others are allowed to make money without paying anything.

Mr. Meilan said the limousine industry was suffering because of the number of courtesy vehicles that come here during special events.

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Ms. Boroday said that the sponsorship for temporary permits may not be a good idea; she had an unpleasant experience during the Super Bowl. Mr. Mora explained the provisions of the Code regarding temporary permits and said that the reason for the sponsorship was for the sponsoring company to control the number of vehicles coming in.

Mr. Feliciano felt that the CSD should know how many courtesy vehicles come to the County for special events by licensing the drivers because there are for-hire vehicles soliciting and picking up passengers under the guise of being courtesy vehicles.

After more discussion, staff agreed to contact counterparts in other cities to determine what legislation governed courtesy vehicles in their operations.

Mr. Cohen asked if anything was done to vehicles that were operating without permits. Mr. Mora said that some citations were issued; however, since for the first time Broward County also issued temporary licenses, under the reciprocity agreement, companies that obtained Broward licenses were not cited.

Mr. Goodman asked for a motion for adjournment. It was moved and seconded with everyone's approval.